

## Some Matters of Nomenclature

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In the admirable and exhaustive studies of the Umbelliferae by Mildred E. Mathias, published in the *Annals of the Missouri Botanical Garden*, there is, (vol. XVII, p. 294) the enunciation of what seems to me a very dangerous doctrine. Dangerous because, as the author can hardly have realized, its general adoption would create great and useless confusion in our nomenclature. The generic name *Lomatium* of Rafinesque was supplanted by *Cogswellia* Sprengel, because Robert Brown had earlier named a genus of Proteaceae *Lomatia*. It is argued that the retention of *Lomatia* "would be a source of permanent confusion". Macbride in 1918 refused to accept this view, and restored *Lomatium*, I think quite correctly. No intelligent person could be so careless as to confuse these names, especially as they refer to totally different kinds of plants, inhabiting totally different regions. I have long been a student of bees and mollusca, but it has never occurred to me to confuse *Ancyla* (in bees) with *Ancylus* (in mollusca), or *Trigona* (in bees) with *Trigonia* (in mollusca). A really difficult case is that of *Ferrissia* (mollusca) and *Ferrisia* (a mealy-bug). These names differ by a letter, but it is impossible to pronounce them differently. There is a botanical example which is rather confusing, that of *Euphorbia peplis* and *E. peplus*. The names are due to Linnaeus, and no one would now think of changing them.

There are two reforms in botanical methods which I believe would be advantageous.

(1) The explicit recognition of subspecies, as distinct from varieties, forms or mutations. While it is not always easy to decide about the rank of a plant, every botanist recognizes the existence of minor types which can be grouped under so-called Linnean species. There is a distinct disadvantage in treating all of these as full species, as is done by some authors. If they are called varieties, they are confused with mutations and forms, the application of the term variety being ambiguous. The recognition of the subspecific category, as in ornithology, appears to be a step toward clarity, and without any disadvantages.

A further consequence in nomenclature follows. In any genus, duplicate names of specific or subspecific rank cannot be permitted. Thus, if a name has been used for a subspecies, it

must not be used for a species, or vice versa. But names of varieties, mutations or forms are not involved, and it should not only be permitted, but strongly advised to use the same term for analogous mutations or forms in congeneric species.

(2) In anything but a very formal paper or list a zoologist will not use the double citation for the authority. That is, he indicates the name of the writer who first proposed the valid specific or other name (in whatever genus), but omits the name of the author of the combination. After nearly half a century of experience, I can testify that this causes no appreciable inconvenience. On the other hand, it saves a lot of printing. There is I think, no valid reason why botanists should not follow the usage of the zoologists in this matter. The old botanical custom, of citing only the author of the combination, can surely have nothing said in its favor. It obliterates the historical facts, and obtrudes information of minor value, especially now that we recognize priority in the same sense as the zoologists.

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